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ABSTRACT

"Text and Performance Quarterly" (TPQ) is the new name (beginning 1989) of a journal that started in 1980 under the name "Literature in Performance." This partial (promotional) issue of "TPQ" consists of a single article from the January 1989 issue that briefly explains the background and scope of the re-defined publication and then goes on to discuss the concept of text as a foundation for a renewal theoretical and methodological approach to the study of communication. By examining the concept of text and its relationship to media and performance, it can be argued that text and performance are media-dependent. The essential characteristics of particular forms of texts, such as the narrative form, as well as the derived experiences with and understanding of particular forms, are dependent upon the medium employed to encode or to create the text. Thus, a text and its performance are most appropriately understood in terms of the encoding elements defining the communicative experience. Towards this end, the argument of media-dependence proceeds in four steps: (1) "text" can be conceived as a generative, rather than derived, concept; (2) the narrative form illustrates the diverse ways in which a form can act upon and shape human understanding; (3) a media perspective identifies the relationships which exist between a communicative form such as narrative and the concept of text as a generative force; and (4) the formal features of oral, literate, and electronic communicative forms can be characterized and distinguished from a media perspective. (Fourteen endnotes are included, and 85 references are appended.) (MM)

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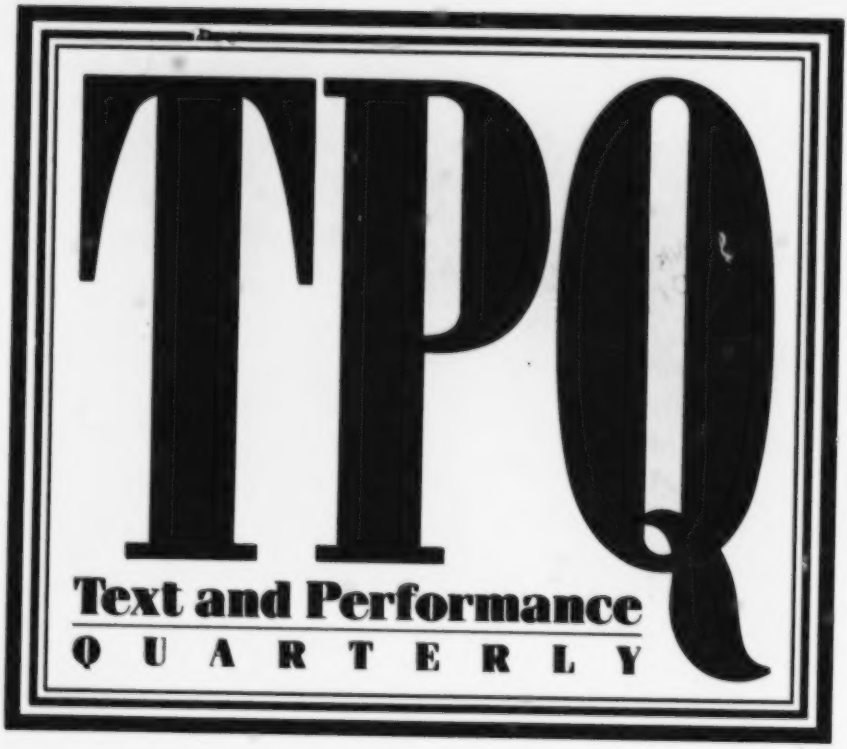
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Text, Narration, and Media

JAMES W. CHESEBRO

WHEN it was first published, in 1980, the predecessor of *Text and Performance Quarterly* expressed a preoccupation with the performance of literature. Indeed, in the words of its first editor, Beverly Whitaker Long, this publication would immediately "serve those . . . involved in the teaching of oral interpretation" and "the study of literature through performance" (v). Hence, the periodical was entitled *Literature in Performance*.

Yet the first issue of *Literature in Performance* also anticipated change. Long specifically expected that "preliterate" contexts would ultimately be examined and that the publication would "strive also to offer exchange of ideas among scholars" in such diverse areas as classics, religion, anthropology, folklore, psychology, cultural history, and sociology.

The new title of the journal, *Text and Performance Quarterly*, would appear to signal a critical shift in the scope, if not the governing conception, of the publication. The introduction of the word *text* into the title appears formally to recognize, highlight, and incorporate a cluster of text-related scholarly issues as an essential and defining feature. These text-related issues may not only redefine the objects of study generally assessed in past volumes, shifting attention from a sole preoccupation with literature to a far more diverse set of communicative forms, but may also profoundly reconceive the ways in which literary, performance, and communicative forms are understood. For example, emphasizing etymological issues, Walter J. Ong has argued that the word *text* shifts attention from literature to orality: " 'Text,' from a root meaning 'to weave,' is, in absolute terms, more compatible etymologically with oral utterance than is 'literature,' which refers to letters etymologically/(*literae*) of the alphabet" (13).

The introduction of *text* into the title may likewise suggest that the periodical will now examine a host of related concepts such as *pretext, textuality, visual texts,* and *intertextuality*. More profoundly, as an orientation, *text* may provide a foundation for a renewed theoretical and methodological approach to the study of communication. For example, while recognizing that the word *text* "is fashionable and therefore

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suspect in certain quarters," Roland Barthes has argued that a "text must not be thought of as a defined object," for the word *text* emphasizes what is "*experienced*" or what "*one conceives, perceives, and receives,*" which therefore requires that *text* be approached, in Barthes' view, as "a methodological field" (74–76).

This essay is preoccupied with the concept of *text*, offers a renewed exploration of the issues embedded in the concept of *text*, and examines its relationship to media and performance. In general terms, the posture adopted here holds that text and performance are media-dependent. Specifically, the thesis developed in this essay posits that the essential characteristics of particular forms of texts, such as the narrative form, as well as the derived experiences with and understanding of particular forms, are dependent upon the medium employed to encode[1] or to create the text. Thus, a text and its performance are most appropriately understood in terms of the encoding elements defining the communicative experience.

Towards this end, the argument proceeds in four steps. First, it is suggested that *text* can be conceived as a generative, rather than derived, concept. Second, the narrative form is introduced as an extended example employed to illustrate the diverse ways in which a form can act upon and shape human understanding. Third, a "media perspective" is provided as a way of identifying the relationships which exist between a communicative form such as narrative and the concept of *text* as a generative force. Fourth and finally, the formal features of oral, literate, and electronic communicative forms are characterized and distinguished from a media perspective. Accordingly, it is appropriate initially to reconsider *text* as a theoretical concept.

TEXT AS A GENERATIVE FORCE[2]

The traditional definition of *text* places its emphasis upon written language, literature, and the coherence and conventions of written language which create literary forms. Reflecting this tradition, *Webster's Third New International Dictionary of the English Language Unabridged* defines a *text* as "the original written or printed words and form of a literary work" (3: 2365). As a method of study, such a conception of *text* reflects, for example, the frame of reference of structuralism, which, in Josué V. Harari's view, "has been in fashion in Anglo-American intellectual circles since the later sixties" (17). In a more extended discussion, Harari has explained:

> Structural analysis, however, bypasses the problems associated with the figure of the author as well as other criteria exterior to the text, and instead focuses its attention on the text, understood as a construct whose mode of functioning must be described. As a result, rather than talking about truth(s), it becomes necessary to speak about a work in terms of the validity and coherence of its language. (23)[3]

Scholars and critics associated with the post-structural or postmodern movement have offered an alternative to the concept *text* employed in structural analyses. An initial foundation for the post-structuralist perspective begins with a distinction between a *work* and a *text*. In this view, a *work* is a physical object, whereas a *text* is any kind of response to or experience derived from the work. As Barthes has explained:

> . . . the work is concrete, occupying a portion of book-space (in a library, for example); the Text, on the other hand, is a methodological field. . . . While the work is held in the hand,

> the text is held in language: it exists only as discourse. The Text is not the decomposition of the work; rather it is the work that is the Text's imaginary tail. In other words, *the Text is experienced only in an activity, a production*. It follows that the Text cannot stop, at the end of a library shelf, for example; the constitutive movement of Text is a *traversal* [*traversée*]: it can cut across a work, several works. (74–75)

Accordingly, any experience derived from, any response to, or any use made of a work must be understood as distinct from the original work, for the reactions to the work are a discrete text or human extension and construction which may have virtually nothing to do with the original work.

The post-structuralist distinction between a *work* and a *text* has profound implications. Extended discussions of these implications are readily available elsewhere.[4] For our purposes here, three of these implications are appropriately extracted and highlighted.

First, any kind of textual analysis, such as a performance or critical assessment, functions independently of the original work, ultimately displacing the original work. The textual analysis, be it a performance or critical assessment, is itself to be then viewed as an original work, perhaps to be subjected to other textual analyses, but the textual analysis itself constitutes a distinct symbolic construction to be assessed as part of an ongoing sociocultural system which brought the textual analysis into existence; only one part of the textual analysis can be assumed to have been formed by the original work analyzed. In this sense, a text necessarily displaces an original work, because the text now occupies the attention once held by the original work. More profoundly, the text inherently creates a new symbolic orientation for assessing an original work. The new text necessarily: (1) links an original work with new symbolic concepts, relationships, and qualifiers not previously associated with an original work (at least, in tone and mood, a new text cannot—and to justify itself, should not—exactly duplicate the original work); (2) creates a new setting and context for assessing the original work; and (3) affects the *ethos* of the original work, for the characteristics attributed to the source of the new text are now linked to the original work. In addition, there is a sense in which the new text would not have been created unless the adequacy of the original work as presented somehow required renewal, modification, amplification, or revision.

Second, all texts are ideological constructions. Assuming, as Gérard Genette (1979) does, that all symbol-using is arbitrary and conventional, language-using has no necessary relationship to external phenomena. In the post-structural framework, language-using represents the orientation, drives, and needs of the symbol-user and therefore the ideological position of the symbol-user. As Barthes has maintained, "*A work whose integrally symbolic nature one conceives, perceives, and receives is a text*" (76).

Third, all works convey multiple and contradictory meanings. Denying concepts such as the "ideal," "implied," "authorial," and "narrative" reader, as Jonathan Culler has suggested, the issue turns on the nature of an "actual audience" (34). When examining the reactions of an actual audience, the issue is not that a work can potentially generate divergent reactions, but rather that, as Louis Marin has stated the case, "*meaning is plural*" (239), or as Barthes has argued:

> The Text is plural. This does not mean just that it has several meanings, but rather that it achieves plurality of meaning, an *irreducible* plurality. The Text is not coexistence of

> meanings but passage, traversal; thus it answers not to an interpretation, liberal though it may be, but to an explosion, a dissemination. The Text's plurality does not depend on the ambiguity of its contents, but rather on what could be called the *stereographic plurality* of the signifiers that weave it (etymologically the text is a cloth; *textus*, from which text derives, means 'woven'). (76)

As Lawrence Grossberg has more precisely noted: ". . . no element is definable in and of itself; it exists—its identity takes shape—only in its complex relations to, its differences from, its others (and, of course, there can be no single definition of the other, i.e., contradiction is itself a complex and historical relationship)" (90).

From yet another perspective, *text* can be related to the dominant media of a culture and employed to identify the specific orientation of a cultural system. Ju. M. Lotman has distinguished two types of cultures (qtd. in Eco 137–138). In one type of cultural system, *grammar-oriented* culture, texts are believed to be generated by combinations of discrete units and are judged correct or incorrect according to their conformity to the combinational rules previously established by a culture. In this regard, the intrinsic orientation of the traditional approach to text analysis is consistent with the assumptions of a grammar-oriented cultural system.

Yet, as Lotman's distinction suggests, it is possible to conceive of *text* in at least one other basic way. Some cultures, Lotman has argued, are governed by a repertoire of texts which impose models for behavior. In these *text-oriented* societies, texts are macro-units from which cultural rules are inferred and derived. In extending his analysis, Lotman has further posited that grammar-oriented cultures necessarily focus upon the content of a message while text-oriented cultures focus predominantly upon the expression, form, and medium of a message.

The particular characteristics of the grammar- and text-oriented societies emerge most vividly when a dramatic shift from a predominantly oral to literate culture has been detailed within a single societal system. For example, Alexander R. Luria traced the evolution of the Uzbekistan and Kirghizia regions in the Soviet Union "in the late 1920s and early 1930s" when "these regions witnessed a radical restructuring of their socio-economic system and culture" (12). Prior to the revolution, the "people of Uzbekistan" had "been virtually 100 percent illiterate for centuries" (Luria 13). After the revolution,

> an extensive network of schools opened, and despite their short-term nature, the literacy programs familiarized large numbers of adults with the elements of modern technology. . . . In acquiring the rudiments of reading and writing, people had to break down spoken language into its constituents and encode it in a system of symbols. . . . As a result, people became acquainted not only with new fields of knowledge but also with *new motives for action*. (Luria 13)

Luria specifically contrasted the oral and literate periods, and he has reported that in the oral culture, experiences were described as "direct graphic-functional" activities, while in the emergent literate culture, descriptions of experiences went "beyond immediate impressions and the reproduction of concrete forms of practical activity," "the isolation of the essential features of objects," and "practical 'situational' thinking" to "the more extensive system of general human experience," "complex abstract categories," and "rationality" motivated by "future planning, the interests of the collective, and, finally, a number of important cultural topics that are closely associated with achievement of literacy and assimilation of theoretical knowledge"

(162-163). Other analyses have similarly suggested that the shift from a predominantly oral to literate culture alters modes of communication and consciousness.[5]

When these basic variants of *text* are recognized, several interim conclusions related to this discussion are possible. First, the traditional conception of *text* provides a ready base for conceiving and understanding literacy as a mode of communication. Second, the traditional concept of *text* is not clearly useful for discussing alternative types of communication—such as oral and electronic modes of communication—as texts when these alternative modes require that context, nonverbal behaviors, and icons (images/visuals) be treated as critical elements. Third, given its focus upon the intrinsic features of written language, the traditional conception of *text* does not provide a convenient way for assessing the formal relationships which exist between a work and the consequences or effects of a work. Even as late as the 1960s, Jill Taft-Kaufman has reported that oral interpretation was conceived as establishing a "congruence" between "the inner form of the literature" and the performance of literature (164). Yet, as Mary Strine has more recently suggested, interpretation or oral performance of a written work is an activity which creates a new text.[6]

Similarly, the criticism of a work is itself an activity which creates a new text. As Harari has noted, "the critic" is "a *producer* of text," and "criticism has become an independent operation that is primary in the production of texts" (70). Accordingly, the traditional concept of *text* does not clearly establish a province of study or a precise framework for identifying and determining the essential and accidental relationships among texts nor does the traditional approach provide a foundation for exploring the ways in which media systems affect definitions and interactions among texts. These issues are aptly illustrated by way of an extended example, the ways in which narration is understood and used.

The narrative or story-telling form has received renewed attention in recent conceptions offered by Walter R. Fisher. Fisher has maintained that the " 'enacted dramatic narrative' " is " 'the basic and essential genre for the characterisation of human action' " ("Narration as" 2).[7] His claim is profound, and applications of Fisher's conception are becoming as popular[8] and controversial[9] within the discipline as Ernest G. Bormann's fantasy theme analysis (see, e.g., *The Force*).

DEFINING NARRATION

Yet Fisher's definition of narration is decidedly theoretical, not methodological. Fisher has specified his concerns and defined narration in these terms: "I refer to a theory of symbolic actions—words and/or deeds—that have sequence and meaning for those who live, create, or interpret them" ("Narration as" 2).

Three specific features of this definition of narration deserve attention. First, narration need not be related to a particular literary form or even to literacy. A narrative may be solely oral or nonverbal in form. Thus, narration need not possess a "traditional argumentative, persuasive theme," nor even a "literary, aesthetic theme" (Fisher, "Narration as" 2). Indeed, a narrative form may eschew any "rational standard" and fail to satisfy any of the traditional standards of "formal logic" (Fisher, "Narration as" 2).

Second, while every narrative possesses a "sequence," narration is not defined by its adherence to any particular type or kind of sequence. The internal structure of the

narrative form may vary tremendously. Indeed, multiple types of progressions characterize the form.

Third, the meaning or understanding which a narrative conveys to an audience depends upon the kind of social construction which an audience imposes upon the story. Selective attention, perceptual condition, and audience needs determine what a story "becomes" in terms of its impact.

While the characteristics Fisher has attributed to narrative may initially appear incomplete, his definition is flexible and recognizes the diverse ways in which a narrative may manifest itself. Certainly Fisher's conception is consistent with established definitions. The *Oxford English Dictionary* defines narration merely as "The action of relating or recounting" (23). Similarly, *Webster's Third New International Dictionary of the English Language Unabridged* defines narration simply as "the act or process of telling the particulars of an act, occurrence, or course of events" (2: 1503). In all of these conceptions, narration functions as an "open-ended" system, or, more precisely, as a *species* of discourse, rather than as a precise rhetorical genre characterized by a particular constellation of formal features (Campbell and Jamieson 18–25). Indeed, as commonly employed in the narrative form, types or forms of development may differ dramatically. For example, Burke (*Counter-Statement* 124–126) has identified four basic developmental forms—syllogistic, qualitative, repetitive, and conventional—which may characterize any kind of symbol-using. Likewise, types of characterization can reasonably vary widely in the narrative form. In some narratives, a character figure has been powerfully cast as "completely expressing" the innermost "thoughts and feeling" of the character, whereas in other narratives the central figure is "externalized" and all "thoughts and feeling remain unexpressed" (Auerbach 11). In this context, the open-ended conception of narrative provided in conventional and established definitions of narrative aptly captures the relatively unspecified nature of narrative as a species of discourse. In all, if a definition of *narrative* is to respond to the diverse ways in which the term has been commonly used and accepted, its meaning must admit of generic and formal variations in order to reflect the diversity of narrative as a species of discourse.

While I employ these basic understandings of narration as my point of departure, my intent is not to duplicate Fisher's position. Fisher has noted that his specific intent is to outline a "narrative perspective" ("Narration as" 2). He explicitly distinguishes his concern for the "narrative perspective" from " 'narratism' " which would deal with "particular" methods of "investigation" ("Narration as" 2).

The province of this paper is narratism, or the particular methods of investigation which reveal how story-telling functions and manifests itself as a mode of communication. As employed in this account, several different forms of narratism are explored.

In terms of Fisher's perspective, I want to suggest that there are at least three basic genres of story-telling which constitute the narrative paradigm Fisher has discussed. Fisher's perspective is paradigmatic; mine is generic. While Fisher's paradigmatic perspective reveals a community understanding or shared vision (Kuhn), the generic orientation employed here reveals the methodological issues and applied issues which ultimately sustain, enhance, and account for specific narrative forms used and the dramatic revisions and differences which affect the ways in which a community adheres to a paradigm.

From a substantive perspective, I want to suggest that the basic nature of the story-telling experience changes dramatically depending upon the type of medium employed to tell the story. The narrative mode is media-dependent. As the medium of communication employed to tell the story changes, the essential nature of the story-telling experience changes. In a sentence, mode is dependent upon medium.

In terms of existing theories of rhetoric, the position adopted here implies that sufficient precision has not been provided when defining rhetorical modes, figures, and tropes (see, e.g., Brandt 281–284; see also D'Angelo; Halloran). A rhetorical mode is not a universal, with invariant formal and substantive characteristics and effects. As the medium of communication changes, both the formal and substantive characteristics of the rhetorical mode and the anticipated and actual effects are altered dramatically. In other words, schools or philosophies of rhetoric, with their related theories and methods of investigation, are media-bound, functioning only within the context of the medium being described. The failure to recognize the media-bound limitation of each rhetorical school has misled, suggesting universals regarding rhetorical forms where such universals do not exist.

With these perspectives in mind, I want to identify my conception of media systems, outline the ways in which a media perspective affects communicative exchanges, and then illustrate this view by examining the ways in which story-telling experiences vary from one medium to another. The point of departure is the media system itself.

THE MEDIA PERSPECTIVE

All communication requires that some apparatus be employed to convey messages to others. Thoughts cannot be conveyed mentalistically directly from one mind to another. A communication channel or apparatus must be used. The apparatus may be the human voice, designed to stimulate the auditory system, or it may be the printed word, designed to stimulate the visual system, or it may be electronic, designed to stimulate visual and auditory systems simultaneously. We do not convey conceptions and understandings to others directly; all communication is inherently mediated.

Each of these media systems invokes a different ratio of sensory receptors in the human being. Reading, for example, requires an intensive visual concentration upon words (abstract conventions) and the linear sequence and pattern among those words, while face-to-face oral communication involves the recognition of the full presence of the oral and nonverbal techniques of the self and other. A different ratio of sense experience defines and distinguishes every medium of communication.

Each medium of communication structures and formats experiences differently. The structural or formal features of each medium highlight certain types of stimuli but not others. In this sense, every medium of communication possesses its own grammar, rhetoric, and ethical principles. By way of example, let me briefly contrast a basic grammatical feature of television with that of print. A basic grammatical component or unit of television is the frame (i.e., a single photographic image), which is foundation for the shot (i.e., a single uninterrupted action of a camera), the scene (i.e., a series of shots in one location and in the same apparent time period), and the sequence (i.e., a series of scenes unified by one location, time period, generating action, point of view, or cast). But the shot inherently emphasizes a particular, the

phenomenal, the single experience, or an example of an ongoing process. Moreover, as a camera moves from a shot to a scene to a sequence, action itself also becomes the critical unit of study. Thus, television inherently isolates the action of particulars as its primary grammatical foundation. In sharp contrast, a basic grammatical feature of print is the word. A word is an arbitrary, conventional, generic abstraction. Words are, in this sense, inherently categorical. Thus, while the basic grammatical feature of television requires that audience members examine a particular and then draw a conclusion, print provides categorizations and requires that audience members conceive of a particular. In this sense, the structural or formal features of television and print are virtually opposites as perceptual, logical, and cognitive processes.

Channels of communication or media systems are not neutral conduits. Media systems are active determinants of what is perceived or "what is." Depending upon the type of mediating system we employ, we pay attention to different stimuli, we literally "know" different things, and our attitudes, values, and actions are formulated accordingly. In my view, the issues involved here are neurophysiological. Our nervous and cerebral systems literally react differently, create different kinds of information, process different cognitive understanding, and manifest different cultural and moral norms, as we vary media systems. Richard B. Gregg has isolated the central role the human neurophysiological system plays in creating epistemic systems (see, e.g., *Symbolic Inducement*). Indeed, he has argued that rhetorical systems are created by the neurophysiological system. He has specifically argued that the rhetorical experience is neurophysiological. Employing Gregg's and related neurophysiological research findings, I have previously argued that:

> . . . the medium employed to convey content or information affects the ways in which the content or information is understood. While a particular medium may not alter the ability of the human being to acquire, accumulate, or use new information, a media-cognition relationship and process exists which determines how information is integrated and used by the human being. . . . [S]pecific media are linked to particular modes of understanding. Speech, reading, and writing generate predominantly analytical, logical, sequential, and scientific modes of understanding. Such processing techniques appear to be digital or Aristotelian in nature. Televised and musical formats generate predominantly synthesizing, holistic, pattern-recognition, and aesthetic modes of understanding. Such processing techniques appear to be analogic or relativistic in nature. (Chesebro, "The Media Reality" 118–119).

The media-cognition relationship functions culturally, defining generations and normative definitions of what knowledge is. Gary Gumpert and Robert Cathcart have argued:

> . . . media grammar (those rules and conventions based upon the properties which constitute media), and the acquisition of media literacy (the ability to meaningfully process mediated data) are altering social relationships. People develop particular media consciousness because media have different framing conventions and time orientations. That is, persons are influenced by the conventions and orientations peculiar to the media process first acquired and relate more readily to others with a similar media set. Fifty and sixty year olds, for example, who have learned to process reality in terms of a logically ordered, continuous and linear world produced by a primary print orientation feel linked in rejecting the world view of those whose electronic orientation is to a visual/auditory, discontinuous reality. On the other hand, eighteen to twenty year olds might feel removed from twelve to fourteen year olds because they cannot fully grasp the digitally oriented computer world. (23–24)

Overall, without exaggeration, it seems appropriate to note that the type of media system employed defines what is perceived, how information is processed, the mode of inferences derived from external stimuli, the social patterns of interaction which unify and divide, ultimately creating different spheres of cultural and moral frames of reference.

The issue here is not a content-form choice. A media perspective always involves an examination of the content or ideational dimension of any message. However, it treats content in at least two rather unique ways. First, rather than assuming that content exists in a context-free environment, a media perspective presumes that the media system used to convey message content also inherently constitutes the form defining the immediate context of message content. A media system prescribes the specific channel used to convey content, functions as the most immediate context of message content, generates a kind of information as important to apprehension as the information generated by content (see, e.g., Salomon), and directly affects response (see, e.g., Berlo 63–70). Second, in assessing effects, the media perspective assumes that content or the ideational dimension is only one component determining the social meaning conveyed to others. Content cannot automatically be assumed to be the primary determinant of effect. In a comprehensive analysis, the influence of formatting and structuring features of a medium must also be assessed in terms of apprehension. Thus, rather than assuming that a one-to-one correspondence exists between perceived content and effect, a media perspective examines all message variables to determine the degree to which content and/or other production variables explain responses and understandings.

Thus, from a media perspective, media systems do more than store and transmit ideas; media systems transform ideas, introducing new sensory and temporal-spatial relationships within and among ideas. An idea cannot be examined independently of the media system which gave form and structure to the idea. In a previous essay, I formally isolated several principles which define the media perspective. Three of those principles deserve attention in this context:

First, "the content of communication is decisively affected and shaped by how content is conveyed to others."

Second, "communication channels are active agencies which reformat, alter, and determine how human beings respond and understand information."

Third, "a comprehensive view of communication requires that these channels of communication be the direct object of study, compared and contrasted, in terms of their influence upon information and people" (Chesebro, "A Media Perspective").

MEDIA SYSTEMS AND THE NARRATIVE EXPERIENCE

I have found it convenient to classify or categorize media systems as *oral*, *literate*, or *electronic*. This *orality-literacy-electronic* classification scheme is not intended to be rigid. I certainly recognize Ong's observation that these media systems are frequently evolutionally interrelated (15), and that it is often useful to recognize secondary or intermediate stages or linkages among them (11). Moreover, the classification is intended to be descriptive and interpretative, not evaluative. I am not convinced that a literate medium of communication is somehow more instructive or intellectually valuable than any particular oral or electronic medium of communication. Rather I would hold that these media systems are simply different, introducing

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different understandings and creating different kinds of cultural and generational cognitive and moral frames of reference.

From a rhetorical perspective, the *orality-literacy-electronic* framework reveals different dimensions and features of communicative experiences. In a prior analysis (Chesebro, "Media Transformations"),[10] three of these differences were isolated and are appropriately amplified here.

First, the dominant media system of a culture clearly controls the number of people who can be effectively addressed within each culture, a factor which ultimately provides a foundation for determining the unique substantive characteristic of oral, literate, and electronic cultures.

In oral cultures, there are absolute limits to the number of people who can reasonably and effectively be communicated with while still preserving the sense of intimacy characterizing face-to-face interactions. In this sense, geography and immediate spatial relationships constitute a key feature of a face-to-face interaction and establish a critical element of a viable oral culture for both the individuals and the sense of community which support oral culture. Accordingly, in defining "what a thing *is*," Burke has selected *substance* as a universal concept (*Grammar* 23). Burke has specifically argued that a particular kind of communicative interaction can be said to possess "*geometric substance*" if it gains its identity by its place "in its setting, existing both in itself and as part of its background" and if "these relations exist all at once" (*Grammar* 29). Insofar as face-to-face interaction must exist in a specific setting which functions as the context of the interaction, interactions which are continuously affected by the simultaneous exchange of verbal and nonverbal activity by both sources and receivers, Burke's geometric metaphor becomes an apt way of characterizing the substance of the oral culture and the unique emphasis the oral culture attributes to the individual speaker as part of a community.

However, the expected and actual levels of and standards for participation in oral cultures simply do not and cannot exist in literate cultures. The mass distribution capabilities of the printed word dramatically increase, to the million and more level, the number of people who can theoretically be expected to participate in the communication process. At the same time, the actual act of reading is an individual and personal experience which requires that the reader shift his or her attention from the immediate environment to the context created in a document. At the moment a document is read and apprehended, a profoundly one-to-one relationship is established between writer and reader. In Burke's terminology, the substance of the literate exchange is *familial*, in the sense that reading creates a private relationship or "spiritualized intimacy" between writer and reader, a joint sharing of the tones and moods—if not proposed attitudes, beliefs, and actions—contained within the printed document (*Grammar* 29).

The substance or definition of electronic culture differs markedly from the primary characteristic of oral and literate cultures. The sheer number of people participating in the electronic mode can easily approach the tens of millions at any given moment. But these contacts lack the communal context of oral cultures and the personal involvement offered by literate cultures. Electronic messages are transmitted to a diversity of contexts, to hosts of individuals and groups of individuals engaged in a variety of different activities. A broadcast song, for example, may be heard through a headset or in a crowded elevator, or may constitute the background music of a romantic evening in one's home. Functioning as an inherently contradictory or

paradoxical mode, electronic messages create a unity among profoundly different kinds and types of situations, people, activities, and motives. Unity is created not by appeals to commonly shared communal or personal experiences but rather by exploring future options and alternatives. Television, for example, provides a sense of "where we are going," of "what might be," in terms of individual styles (see, e.g., Faber, Brown, and McLeod), group values (see, e.g., Chesebro, "Communication, Values"), and as a national and global community (see, e.g., Carey and Fritzler). In Burke's terms, a *directional* substance defines electronic culture (*Grammar* 31-33), for electronic culture reveals not only " 'tendencies' and 'trends' " but individual and national "*movement*," of which the receiver can "mystically select" any one "*moment* as motive" (Burke, *Grammar* 32).

Second, the particular mode of a media system affects human interaction. In a solely oral culture, communication emphasizes the immediate, the exact time when the word is spoken. Fully to appreciate what is said, one must directly experience the spoken word. As Lawrence W. Rosenfield and Thomas F. Mader have characterized such communicative experiences, oral culture discourse must accordingly be viewed as predominantly epideictic, insofar as it "permits participants' awareness and appreciation of what constitutes *community*" (478), "commemorates and reinforces the values of the individual and the community" (479), gives "flesh to presence" (484) and the "immediate" (532), with its emphasis upon "*communal pleasure*," "the joys of relationships," and "ceremonial events" which "reify bonds of trust and sanctify the group" (479). As Rosenfield and Mader conclude:

> The earlier effort to meld experience and passion through discourse probably occurred in Greece between 1500 and 500 B.C. In this early period communicative appeals to communal gratification were more intense than in any later era. Communication took advantage of listeners' talent for wonder (*thaumadzein*). Yet the appeal was to mental rather than carnal needs. It gave to preliterate persons of "corporeal imagination" a sensual excitement. (481)

Likewise, in an oral culture, delivery functions as a critical dimension of both speaking and listening. Moreover, without artificial recording devices to recall what is said, human memory must be invoked. Memory becomes critical if tradition is to be preserved in the oral culture. However, preserving concepts solely in human memory tends to alter what is retained. As Ong has noted, "In a primary oral culture, to solve effectively the problem of retaining and retrieving carefully articulated thought, you have to do your thinking in mnemonic patterns, shaped for ready oral recurrence" (4). Yet even these mnemonic devices are unlikely to be effective. Jeff Opland has reported that while oral peoples do try for verbatim repetition of poems and other oral art forms, repetition produces agreement with the original only 60 percent of the time (158).[11] What is permanent and what can be permanent within an oral culture is thus dramatically different than in literate or electronic cultures. By literate standards, for example, a 60 percent agreement is hardly a reliable standard. Indeed, in literate societies, exact recall issues are ultimately eliminated by virtue of the fact that words are preserved in print.

In a literate culture, attention shifts to arrangement and style, within rather rigorous syntactical guidelines. At the same time, as is detailed below, printed messages are ultimately discussions of and from the past. The time delays between when a story is written, published, and read means that a reader can only encounter

an event from the past or as it was perceived and written by a writer in a prior time period. Accordingly, while emphasizing arrangement and style, literate culture discourse is also ultimately forensic in nature, given that both forensic discourse and reading are inherently ways of "looking to the past" to find a "statement of facts" (Baldwin 15, 35).

In contrast, the visual component of electronic media such as television and film highlights motion. The apparent motion within a frame, the movement embedded within the progression of shots, and the series and sequences of shots in one location and from one location to another location define what is known (see, e.g., Harrington). The traditional notions of arrangement and style which characterize literate cultures are dramatically altered in such electronic media. The constant motion characterizing all electronic media reflects, not only metaphorically but literally, a search and quest, or what has been identified in classical rhetoric as a concern for invention. Indeed, the orientation of electronic media is always forward, to a future, appropriately consistent with the future time frame associated with deliberative discourse. In its most precise form, the ever-present television commercial seeks to influence future buying behaviors and patterns. From a larger perspective, Theodore Roszak has maintained that high technology (what he has called the "data merchants") is designed to create and sustain a consumer orientation, attempting to reinforce a vision in which purchasing creates an ideal future (21–46). More profoundly, electronic technologies themselves are most frequently justified not by what they have been or are doing, but by what they can accomplish in the future (see, e.g., Brand, 1987; Fabin, 1968). This future orientation, the desire to create and invent, and the related institutional implications are perhaps best captured in the title of Dizard's book: *The Coming Information Age: An Overview of Technology, Economics, and Politics*, and in Dizard's initial observation in this book that "perhaps within the next half-century," as "a universal electronic information network capable of reaching everyone everywhere" emerges, an opportunity will be created, "for the first time," which will allow "mankind" to "seriously consider the welfare of the entire race" (xiii).

Third, the nature of knowledge itself changes as one moves from an oral to literate to electronic culture. In an oral culture, the knower and what is known are related. Accurate and reliable knowledge requires direct social interaction, participation in the lived experience, and exposure to the imminent and immediate source of knowledge. However, in a literate culture, the knower and what is known are typically unrelated. The sociological and personal features of the source of the printed word are unlikely to be known. Indeed, in a literate culture, sources are likely to be, at best, ambiguous and receivers unpredictable. Once our words appear in print, we have no idea who will read them or how they will react. In contrast, the nature of knowledge is dramatically different in electronic modes such as television and film. While the knower and what is known are reunited in electronic media such as television and film, knowledge is separated from the lived experience. Television and film conceptions of "what is" report only what can be seen and heard; but more importantly, this visual and auditory conception of "what exists" is typically understood within a totally unrelated context (the home or the movie theatre), a context which did not characterize the original situation. Context-defining influences are thus lost in the electronic culture.

In a more systematic formulation (Chesebro, "Media Transformation II"), these characteristics of oral, literate, and electronic cultures are summarized in the table below:

MEDIA CULTURES AS RHETORICAL SYSTEMS

Communication Variables	Types of Media Cultures		
	Orality	Literacy	Electronics
Rhetorical Canons	Delivery and Memory	Style and Arrangement	Invention
Types of Communication	Epideictic	Forensic	Deliberative
Time	Present	Past	Future
Substance	Geometric	Familial	Directional

With these relationships in mind, it is appropriate to suggest explicitly how the story-telling experience differs from medium to medium as generic systems. The controlling metaphor, the concomitant logical mode, and the type of cognitive understanding required to apprehend a narration within each of these media systems vary dramatically. The following equations summarize these metaphorical-logical-cognitive-media interrelationships:

Oral = Mimesis
Literate = Analysis
Electronic = Synthesis

In an oral culture, stories are both heard and seen. First, all of the dramatic features of oral speech are invoked. The presentation or delivery is complex. The full complex of the physiology of sound emerges. The story is thus shaped by amplitude, pitch, duration, quality, and overtones. In addition, the story is relayed in a referential language, shifting from the bodily to the symbolic and back. Oral rhythms, delivery, and memory are critical, as are the physical relationships between the story teller and listener. Touch, eye contact, smell, proxemics, chronemics, kinesics, and the use of objects all influence what the story is. Moreover, the story merges a host of symbolic forms, auditory and nonverbal, functioning in the present, dependent upon the perceptions of others, in which interpretations and judgments are intimately related. Furthermore, the story teller and listener share a common context. Feedback is immediate, continuous, and constant. Messages are constructed and received in terms of present events. The knower and what is known are related. A story is an intensively involving, participatory, and emotional experience. The ideal story possesses an existential, lived, or phenomenal character (see, e.g., Luria 1-175). The listener knows by experience.

Ultimately, however, the elements of oral cultures cannot be viewed as discrete; the components are reflections of and mutually defined by their participation in a profoundly interdependent culture. All of the elements are necessarily interrelated, fused into an imminent and coherent system, possessing an overall completeness in which all verbal and nonverbal stimuli are integrated in an immediate, flexible, continuous, and prereflective set of symbolic exchanges. Accordingly, *mimesis*, the

rhetorical figure of social integration through representation, aptly characterizes the overall symbolic coherence of the oral culture, although the original meaning of the term must now be specified.

As a rhetorical figure, *mimesis*, which Havelock has described as "that most baffling of all words" (20), has frequently been treated as a concept with a rich, if not contradictory, history of its own.[12] In more direct terms, *mimesis* deals not with the content of communication, but with its form. Rather than functioning as a characteristic of *logoi* or content, as Havelock has aptly noted, the figure falls within the province of "*lexis*" or "the 'medium' by which content is communicated" (202). More precisely, *mimesis* functions as a "basic theoretical principle," guideline, or symbolic construct for social integration and societal organization ("Mimesis" 145) for "the preservation and transmission" of "learning and culture" ("Theophyiactus" 695). For example, Havelock has noted that when a speaker appeals to others to act in a certain way because the behavior is consistent with a lifestyle (i.e., "a whole way of life" 45) which the audience values and emulates (i.e., they have "identified with our ways") because of the "skill of speech," "skill or craft," "style," and "dress" (59–60), "character and ethical judgment" (24) associated with the lifestyle, the rhetorical figure of mimesis has been employed for persuasive ends, while at the same time, "in the course of miming" the "mimicry is the foundation of one of the *technae* of civilisation."[13]

Havelock has aptly characterized the specific features of *mimesis* as a medium for preserving and transmitting learning and culture. In his view, *mimesis* possesses five characteristics. First, it is one of the "basic types of verbal communication" (21), linked solely to the oral mode (59), dealing with "the speeches which are exchanged" among participants (20) or "the living voice, gesture, dress and action generally" (57). Second, it is a form of " 'direct representation' " or " 'skilled reenactment' " (58–59). Third, it is a "process of skilled but sympathetic identification" (59), or " 'sympathetic behavior,' not abstract copying or imitation, and in a great many cases this behaviour is physical, a matter of speech, gesture, gait, pose, dress and the like" (58). Fourth, it provides a "massive repository of useful knowledge, a sort of encyclopedia of ethics, politics, history and technology which the effective citizen was required to learn as the core of his educational equipment" (27). Fifth, at the same time it is "an act both spontaneous and intuitive" (50), serving "inspirational and imaginative effects" (27). Thus, from an audience's perspective, miming is an active, personal, and practical mode of identification with the verbal and nonverbal symbols of a hero cast as a vision or ideal of a community. In this sense, the ideal narrative form of oral culture is the epic and the dominant metaphor of the oral story is community.

In literate cultures, stories are read. First, the reader is alone. The mode of interaction is individualistic and passive. The author may be unknown. At best, an ambiguous or sociological relationship defines the relationship between the reader and story teller. Moreover, the progression of the story is propositional and logical; the premium is placed on sequential and syllogistic logic. Each word can be isolated, assessed for its unique style or arrangement. In addition, the story occurs in a context-free environment; that is, the environment of the reader is unrelated to the context of the story. The reality created is a social reality or intersubjective reality. Accordingly, feedback is delayed and selective. Furthermore, messages are ultimately

discussions of the past. The time delays between when a story is written, published, and read means that a reader can only encounter an event from the past.

Ultimately, given the discrete or digital nature of words and the rigorously controlled unidirectional and sequential ordering process used to govern word usage in the literate mode, the ideal form for the literate culture is the murder mystery. The suspense and intrigue of the murder mystery are dependent upon the systematic and linear order of unfolding events, clues, and motives chronicled in the narrative. Michael Holquist has particularly noted that "crime is very old" but that "detective fiction," the "tale of pure puzzle, pure ratiocination," is "very new," for "no detective fiction" existed "before the 19th century" (138-139). In Holquist's view, the critical element of detective fiction is "the detective, the instrument of pure logic," who symbolizes the belief that "there are no mysteries, there is only incorrect reasoning" (141). Highlighting the "sense of closure" which print provides (148), which "reaches its peak" in the "tightly closed verbal" form of the detective story (133), Ong has similarly noted that, "The climactic linear plot reaches a plenary form in the detective story—relentlessly rising tension, exquisitely tidy discovery and reversal, perfectly resolved denouement" (144). In these senses, a scientific metaphor characterizes and unifies the discourses which constitute the literate narrative form. Thus, conveyed through and mediated by print, the dominant mode of logic governing the literate narrative is analysis, for the print medium itself reflects, almost perfectly, the classical conception of analysis as a breaking down of a system into its component parts and the arrangements of these parts into a sequential and ordered formula. When extended to societal and global levels, the analytical mode generated by the printed word may ultimately have given rise to scientific thought and its related social institutions (see, e.g., Logan).

In an electronic culture, stories are both seen and heard. First, the auditory and visual modes are merged. More profoundly, complex information is continuously evident. All elements of the story are constantly in view, constantly changing, continually in process. The drama is "alive" in all of its dramatic features. The characterization of the agents within the story, the scene of the story, the motives for action, the actions themselves, and the way actions are executed are each ever-present and continually evolving before the viewer. Indeed, the television series itself is an ongoing story which may last for some 26 weeks, each week revealing a new feature and new dramatic element. The unending film sequels—such as *Rocky* I, II, III, and IV—reflect this same quality. Ultimately, electronic stories are generic, revealing and reflecting variations of different lifestyles rather than concentrating upon a specific plotline which is appreciated as an independent and unique art form. Television commercials, as mini-stories, idealize a particular lifestyle. Prime-time soap operas satirize a particular lifestyle. Television newsprograms link diverse lifestyles. Situation comedies establish and portray coherent lifestyles, while also minimizing the pain of different lifestyles. In this sense, the logic of television is synthesis, for television creates an overall pattern of lived experiences which are cast as lifestyles, a logic which reflects a mode of interpretation whose central means is the integration and portrayal of wholes. The synthesizing logic of television as a medium is also reflected in its archetype, the rock music video.

Ultimately, given its intertextual and repetitive nature, the ideal form for the electronic culture is the rock music video. Focusing upon MTV rock videos, Charles

Turner has argued that rock music videos create a "*new perceptual agenda*" (382). He has specifically noted that rock music videos are frequently intercut with visual footage, often "to the beat of the song" (383), from "famous movies and television shows, popular film genres and graphic styles" (382). In drawing from diverse media systems, intertextuality becomes the subject-matter of the rock music video, for the rock music video links discrete icons from different media systems which possess no previously known syllogistic, temporal, or spatial relationships. In Turner's view, "the past is drawn rhythmically into the present, imposing a transient coherence where before there may have been none" (384). Duplicating the montage in which heterogeneous elements are blended together, the cuts inserted into the rock music video are also apparently unrelated to each other. In Turner's view, "the video exemplifies a pictorial structure in which an appropriation from our mediated storehouse," or "Great Intersubjectivized American Image-Bank" (385), "is retrieved to fashion meaning in a current communication" (384). In addition, the cuts inserted into the music video have no immediately understandable relationship to the lyrics of the song or understood image and style of the performers. Accordingly, for some, the rock music video is a fragmented presentation, lacking any kind or type of substantive and logical unity, a " 'heap of broken images,' " a " 'context of no context,' " and a "mediated wasteland where *linkage is all* and meaning follows after, no matter" (Turner 383). For others, such as Kuan-Hsing Chen, the rock music video is a "concrete" example of "cultural schizophrenia," "a part of our cultural semiosis without signified or even signifier," an "implosion of meaning" reflecting a "sense of losing control and the sense of having no future" (674). In greater detail, Chen has aptly argued:

> The form of MTV is simulacral. The originality of MTV lies in its technique of montage, collage, segmentation with the quotation of irrelevant cultural representation. It abandons the ideology of reality principle: the original, the copy, the same, and the like are displaced by simulacrum without the nostalgia of creativity. The practice of MTV has nothing to do with truth or reality; the infinite (re-)production of fascinating image satellites the hyperreality of simulacrum. (674)

Thus, it should come as no surprise, in an age or "cult" of massive electronic information (see, e.g., Roszak), that a new kind of story-telling, unique in form and content, has emerged. As a narrative form, the rock music video ignores prior social conceptions of realities and the various media and logic systems which have organized these realities. While it employs information from other media systems (intertextuality), the information employed has been segmented, separated from its original contexts, and is ultimately treated as "discrete, separable, sortable bits of data" (Turner 389). Using a nondiscursive mode—music—as its organizing principle, the story told is nonreferential or a fictive form which allows viewers to resist being positioned as an object of attention, and therefore beyond control, accepting the images of the rock music video as a spectacle. Jean Baudrillard has argued that

> The masses accept everything and redirect everything en bloc into the spectacular, without requiring any other code, without requiring any meaning, ultimately without resistance, but making everything slide into an indeterminate sphere that is not even that of nonsense, but that of overall manipulation/fascination. (qtd. in Chen 678)

In anthropological terms, Elman R. Service has characterized such forms of societal

and cultural resistance as "involution" (12). In contrast to evolution, in which social participation is encouraged and directed toward "progress along some kind of linear scale" (Service 12), and in contrast to revolution, when a system experiences "radical, relatively abrupt change of the fundamental characteristics of a system" (Service 13), cultural involution is an attempt "to preserve an extant structure, solving its new problems by 'fixing it up'," typically through increasing forms of societal withdrawal and "specializations" (Service 12).

Thus, the rock music video satisfies the requirements of a narrative as an "action of relating or recounting" and an "act or process of telling the particulars of an act, occurrence, or course of events"; but, by virtue of its intertextual nature, a predetermined meaning cannot be readily associated with the collage of icons defining the narrative of the rock music video. Indeed, given the diverse lifestyle experiences of members of a rock music video audience, contradictory and paradoxical interpretations are easily encouraged by the intertextual nature and montage techniques used to create the video, thus allowing both the source and receivers of the video to resist any potential ideology which might be introduced into its narrative form. At the same time, the intertextuality and montage techniques employed are conceptually unified and defined by a logic of synthesis, for intertextuality and montages create, perhaps "force" in the case of the rock music video, a unity and interdependence among diverse iconic images regardless of the original reason for the creation of these icons. Despite its synthesizing logic, as Diana Blackwell has noted, "MTV glorifies 'post-modernism,' a newly emergent 'anti-aesthetic' characterized by the lack of any fixed moral, esthetic or intellectual frame or reference," leading ultimately to a "shift" to a "new, 'cold' universe of communication" (35).[14]

CONCLUSION

Story telling is a communicative experience. The nature of that experience depends upon the medium used to tell the story. Each medium tells a story in a different fashion because each medium invokes a different set of perceptual sense ratios, requires its own context, is restrained by different kinds of production technologies, and is governed by its own type and mode of logic. In the oral culture, the story is created and constrained by mimesis. In the literate culture, the story is constrained by an analytical structure dictated by the technology of the printed word. In the electronic culture, the story is developed and governed by a logic of synthesis which reduces all knowledge to information bits which can then be reformatted and manipulated as desired. Thus, the type of logic fusing the elements within each of these media systems is governed by the technologies of the medium itself which determine how a story can be told in each medium.

This essay began with the premise that text and performance are media-dependent. As I hope I have demonstrated, there are important ways in which media systems affect how human beings interpret and enact their social realities. Yet issues remain.

In the most general of terms, I have sought to expose, rather than foreclose, some of the equations which exist between technological issues and the concerns of those engaged in the study of literature, the performance of literature, and more generally, rhetoricians, be they philosophers, theoretists, methodologists, educators, or critics. Rhetoricians possess the vocabularies to respond meaningfully to technologies.

Questions of technological constraint can and should be explored by those in the arts and humanities in ways far more detailed than this essay has examined.

More specifically, the *orality-literacy-electronics* framework employed in this essay requires reconsideration, perhaps a deconstructive review, but at least a reconstruction which allows human beings to regain an appreciation of the history of prior communicative forms and to re-establish a sense of control regarding how and when these technologies are to be used as communication channels. Ong has already maintained that the oral tradition is lost: "A literate person cannot fully recover a sense of what the word is to purely oral people" (12). Gumpert and Cathcart claim that the use of an oral, literate, or electronic medium is determined by the generation and era into which one is born: "*We as individuals are not in control of the technological environment into which we are born*" (29). And, with proper concern, Blackwell has forecast that electronic communication technologies may create a "new, 'cold' universe of communication" (35). If communication traditions and technologies are to remain within the control of human beings, rather than controlling human beings, a media perspective must inform all approaches to the study of human communication. Communication technologies now exist as a source for both human development and destruction. Both of these potential outcomes require intensive investigation.

ENDNOTES

[1]The use of the word *encode* is not intended to reinforce the encoding/decoding dichotomy in which a distinction is sharply drawn between the techniques a producer employs to create a message and the perceptual frameworks diverse audiences use when apprehending a message (see, e.g., Grossberg & Treichler 278). In the context established here, a medium is quite literally to be understood as a mediation system which establishes a link, channel, or relationship between encoding and decoding processes. However, a medium is not viewed here as a neutral conduit but rather as an active determinant which decisively affects how the encoding and decoding processes are to be related. (For an extended discussion of this view of a medium, see: Chesebro, "Media Transformations.") Parts one and three of this essay, "Text as a Generative Force" and "The Media Perspective," respectively introduce some of the issues related to this view of a medium.

[2]In this context, text-as-a-generative force underscores the originating and creative function of discourse in much the same way in which Burke (*Counter-Statement* 154–158, esp. 157) has noted that a symbol can function as a "*generating principle*" when a "key" symbol "becomes a guiding principle in itself" and creates "secondary" symbols "with no direct bearing upon the pattern of experience behind the key Symbol." In contrast to text-as-a-generative-force, the notion of text-as-a-derivation posits that discourse is primarily a reflection of and can be adequately explained and understood in terms of its origin or source as the cause and necessary precondition of discourse, a view traditionally employed in historical linguistics.

[3]In apparent contrast, Grossberg (90) has suggested that structuralism provides a way of "understanding and describing" particular and "specific, context-dependent" identities, and that "no element is definable in and of itself." In a host of other disciplines, others have rather consistently suggested that the critical defining feature of structuralism is its attention to the component parts and their relationships to one another within a system in sharp contrast to a functional analysis of the entire system in a particular sociocultural context or historical era. The assumption of the structuralist perspective has been that a careful reading of the structure of a system will reveal the essence of the source and creator of a system as well as the uses to which a system can be put. Grossberg's use of the term *structuralism* would appear to be inconsistent with this traditional conception of structuralism. If, however, the context-dependent nature of structuralism proposed by Grossberg presumes that a context is a precisely defined environment—almost a "personal environment"—held to be independent of other precisely defined environments and historical orientations, the definition may be useful. However, given normative uses of the term *structuralism*, Grossberg's use of the term would more closely be associated, for many, with the term *post-structuralism* or *postmodernism* [see, e.g., Foster as well as Grossberg's own references (90) for his definition].

[4]See, e.g., Berman; Culler; Derrida, *Of Grammatology;* Derrida, *Margins;* Foster; Hawkes; Natoli; Sturrock.

[5]Concentrating upon medieval England between AD 1066 and 1307, M. T. Clanchy has reported a "ten-fold" increase in the use of documents during this period (258), with a shift "from memory to written record" (37–38) and from an oral mode to "widening literacy" (57) through the entire "social scale" (56). In Clanchy's view the shift from

an oral to literate culture was critical in "penetrating and structuring the intellect itself," "the development of literate ways of thought," the creation of "psychological differences," and "demanded changes in the way people articulated their thoughts, both individually and collectively in society" (149–150). Of the multiple social consequences he reported, Clanchy has maintained that the shift ultimately created a new "distinction between fact and fiction" (237–251, esp. 251). Similarly, Eric A. Havelock has distinguished the pre-Homeric Greek era, as a "period of non-literacy in which Greek oral poetry was nursed to maturity and in which only oral methods were available to educate the young," from the post-Homeric era in which "alphabetic skills" and "the origins" of "abstract intellectualism styled by the Greek 'philosophy' " emerged (45–46). In Havelock's view, the pre-Homeric era constituted a foundation for a "group will" and "direct and unfettered capacity for action" (198–199), while the post-Homeric era separated the "knower from [the] known" and generated independent self-consciousness (200). In this context, Erich Auerbach has maintained that the pre- and post-Homeric eras were characterized by two distinct conceptions of reality (11).

[6]Insofar as oral interpretation performances are viewed as reflections of the intrinsic features of works of literature, oral interpretation performances would be conceived as *works* (an impossibility in terms of post-structuralist conceptions). Insofar as oral interpretation performances are viewed as responses to the intrinsic features of a work of literature (see, e.g., Bacon, esp. 1–2), oral interpretation performances would be conceived as *texts*.

[7]See also Fisher, "The Narrative"; Fisher, *Human Communication*.

[8]See, e.g., Carey; Carey and Fritzler; Carpenter; Mumby; Rushing.

[9]See, e.g., Lucaites and Condit; McGee and Nelson; Rowland; Warnick.

[10]Employing the *orality-literacy-electronics* framework, 169 of the world's nation-states were classified in terms of their technological ability to sustain a mass culture through orality, literacy, and/or electronics, with the following five categories formulated: "(1) 49 or 28.9% of nation-states lack the population size or common language structure to create a mass oral culture and are therefore classified as 'Pre-Mass Oral Cultures'; (2) 37 or 21.8% of nation-states sustain their mass culture predominantly through oral media and are therefore classified as 'Mass Oral Cultures'; (3) 18 or 10.6% of nation-states sustain their mass culture predominantly through literate media and are therefore classified as 'Mass Literate Cultures'; (4) 60 or 35.5% of nation-states sustain their mass culture predominantly through both literate and electronic media and are therefore classified as 'Mass Literate-Electronic Cultures'; and (5) 5 or 2.9% of nation-states sustain their mass culture predominantly through electronic media and are therefore classified as 'Electronic Cultures' " (Chesebro, "Media Transformations Part II" 10–11).

[11]For an extended analysis of some of the issues involved, see also Opland (qtd. in Ong 62) and Ong (57–58).

[12]Several writers have noted the different, if not paradoxical, ways in which Plato and Aristotle have used the term *mimesis* (see, e.g., Fadiman, esp. 177; Scruton, esp. 26). Others, such as Beckson and Ganz (146–147), have sought to clarify and redefine, arguing that it is appropriate to view *mimesis* as merely a form of imitation or mimicry, while some, such as Cuddon (396), have argued that *mimesis* is not equivalent to the term *mime* nor is it appropriately linked to the use of the written mode. In similar efforts to "purify" the term, Fadiman (105) has argued that *mimesis* cannot be viewed solely as a "model" for others, while Strasberg (516) has noted that the term is not adequately understood by a phrase such as "make-believe" or the simulations created by actors.

[13]Beyond the use of miming explored in this essay, others have used mimesis in other theoretical, methodological, and applied ways. As a more broadly based social theory, Girard (see, e.g., "Myth and Ritual") has suggested that mimetic phenomena exist prior to representations and sign systems. Using phenomena such as victimage and scapegoating as his examples, Girard has concluded that mimetic experiences precede structuralism (see also Harari, esp. 56–60). Auerbach (see, e.g., *Mimesis*) has employed a mimetic perspective as the foundation for an entire critical perspective. Responding to a basic premise of structuralism, Genette (see, e.g., "Valery") has argued that various theories of language inappropriately presume that a mimetic relationship exists between words and things, particularly between poetic language and things. Genette has maintained that the word-thing relationship is solely arbitrary and conventional; an analysis of words will reveal nothing about experience (i.e., things) without a direct exploration of the uses and functions of words in specific contexts.

[14]While the rock music video is the archetype of the synthesizing logic of the electronic era, other electronic modes are equally affected by the centrality of this logical mode. Mark W. Booth (see, e.g., "Art of Words") has reported that all forms of popular music draw from all other cultural forms. Likewise, critical computer-based applications presume a synthesizing logic. For example, a data base has been defined as a "collection of logically related data elements," but these data elements must necessarily come from a variety of different disciplines and fields (which are typically held to be discrete) simply because a data base must be "structured in various ways to meet multiple processing and retrieval needs of organizations and individuals" (Sanders 38–39). Indeed, all computer programming, data entry and coding, and data processing are designed to create an "open-ended" logic system which achieves its processing goals by reducing different kinds of information from different disciplines into a common mode which allows the information to be processed in the same fashion. In this regard, "data manipulation" is typically viewed as a three step process of "classifying," "sorting," and "calculating" (Sanders 11). What is important here in terms of our discussion of the synthesizing logic of electronic media systems is that the diverse origins and substance of data are immaterial to the computer processing system. Similar kinds of claims have been made for radio, film, the telephone, and other particular forms of television (see, e.g., Black and Whitney). Ben H. Bagdikian has provided the classical implication: "Electronics suddenly short-circuited the ancient linkage of literacy and abstract intellectuality" (10).

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